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ABSTRACT

Findings of a study that examined the nature of moral and ethical conflict and accommodation within the schools are presented in this paper, which introduces the conceptual framework of a larger empirical study in progress. The study attempted to: (1) describe the ethical conflict and moral dilemmas faced by teachers and principals; and (2) investigate individuals' actions and beliefs to determine whether an awareness of personal value issues exists. Interviews were conducted with a total of 30 respondents: 5 elementary and 5 secondary principals, and 10 elementary and 10 secondary teachers. Findings indicate that for teachers, professional, collegial loyalty was a dominant measure of moral/ethical action. A conclusion is that individual moral codes often conflict with the entrenched ethical dimensions of the school culture and that conflicts and implicitly valuational resolutions can be expected. (75 references) (LMI)

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Moral and Ethical Dilemmas in Schools

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ABSTRACT

Recently much public attention has focused on value issues concerning corporate, industrial, legal, and medical ethics; but most of the literature on values and education addresses aspects of moral education. The concern of the empirical study1 from which this theoretical paper is derived is not with the teaching of values but rather with the existence of values within the consciousness of individual teachers and principals and within their schools' cultures. Studies have been conducted that address value conflict relating to role theory and organizational value preferences; however the central issues raised in such studies do not concern specifically values of fundamental right and wrong having important moral and ethical significance.

The philosophical and reflective account of moral and ethical dilemmas and conflict in schools, which is introduced in this paper, examines the problem of the professional teacher and administrator having a moral conscience but working within a school with its own, perhaps conflicting, ethical components. This conceptual duality can be traced back to the philosophical debate pitting an individual's moral responsibility against the organizational imperative. However, being right and being wrong are not characteristics peculiar to either the individual or the group at all times without exceptions; therefore blanket statements that argue for one alternative over another are unsatisfactory, for it seems that there will always be exceptions contingent upon situational realities.

The focus of this paper is on the conceptual nature of the problem rather than on the empirical aspect of the research. However, as a descriptive and investigative study, the conceptual framework also encompasses another less philosophical dimension more closely related to the qualitative methodological purpose of the study; its intention is to examine how individuals perceive right and wrong and how, as a consequence, they act based on or in spite of their own beliefs. Ultimately the theoretical problem of right and wrong has practical implications for choice, self-reproach, and nagging doubts that plague individuals as they confront issues involving integrity, hypocrisy, conscience, agony, and guilt within the realm of moral and ethical behaviour and belief.

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Introduction

Schools, as social systems, are characterized in part by the tensions and conflicts that emerge between individuals' personal morals and the ethics of collective groups. In acknowledging Lortie's observation that "tensions arise in the opposition of teacher sentiments to their position in the organization" (Lortie 1975, p.187), the general question underlying the research study from which this paper is derived is directed to the problem that the professional teacher and administrator, while having a moral conscience, work within a school with its own ethical components.

This paper introduces in a theoretical way a larger empirical study that examines conflict and tension between individuals' beliefs about right and wrong and collective ethical imperatives within the context of schools. As an exploratory paper, the research problem is defined and developed in an examination of both the pertinent terminology and the conceptual framework. The reasons for and the purpose and significance of the empirical study are addressed, and the research questions are listed. However, the focus of this paper is on the conceptual rather than the empirical; although a brief statement of the methodology is included, the research findings, which have not yet been

analyzed fully, are not reported in this paper. Therefore this discussion concerns the potential existence and philosophical problem of moral and ethical dilemmas in schools rather than a descriptive account of the nature of such dilemmas.

Within schools, teachers and principals are individuals who have personal concepts of value and morality. Nevertheless, they also are parts of larger groups having their own ethical dimensions. There are those who see this dual persona as separable into two distinct realms of public and personal morality; consequently as a part of the larger system, individuals may obscure any sense of personal moral responsibility. "Blame is shifted from the individual by appealing to the moral defects of the system. While to some extent this defense may be justifiable, individuals nevertheless do make decisions in public morality and cannot escape responsibility for assessing their own actions and their consequences in the light of the fundamental social moral values" (Crittenden 1984, p.20). Therefore it becomes desirable for the individual to reconcile personal moral responsibility and the ethical demands of the group.

In discussing the work of corporate managers, Jackall acknowledges a similar duality and poses a pertinent question: "How does one act in such a world (of conflicting values) and maintain a sense of personal integrity?" (Jackall 1988, p.194). Barnard would answer that when an individual finds it impossible to divorce professional,

official conduct from a private sense of morality, "the alternatives presented are either to violate one's personal morality or to fail in an official or professional obligation. Resignation or withdrawal is often a solution which circumstances 'legitimately' permit. Then the result is maintenance of personal integrity" (Barnard 1938, p.274). But this either-or solution seems too simplistic. Resignation over principle is not often seen in organizations; it is surely a rarity in schools. How then do individuals soothe an injured integrity? Or, indeed, do they even recognize it given the busy whirl of their daily occupational expectations? These questions are central to an examination of tension or conflict, either the "external" kind in which the conflict is played out between or among individuals or, more importantly for this study, "internal tension" in which, as Stott (1988, p.73) claims, conflict exists within one person.

Terminology

Defining the terminology to be used in a research study should be a reasonably straightforward exercise in semantic mechanics. However when the terms in question are "morals," "ethics," "values," and "norms," the murky domains of moral and ethical philosophy and value inquiry confront the process with innumerable varying and often competing

definitions. The philosophical implications of aligning oneself with specific terms are addressed fully in the research study; however, for the purposes of this paper, it is necessary to provide briefly a basic statement of interpretations as they apply throughout the study.

Simply stated, personal morals concern concepts of right and wrong behaviour as perceived by the individual teacher or principal. Once an organization is defined not by informal individual morals but by shared concepts of right and wrong, an ethical dimension emerges. Ethics, then, denote such concepts as defined by collective convictions. The overlap between these two branches of values is obvious. The moral beliefs of teachers and administrators are often, but not always, reflections of the school's ethics. Similarly, ethical behaviour might be perceived as immoral by a non-member of the group or by a deviant member within the group. Although morals and ethics are indeed part of the complex nature of values, it should be emphasized that not all values reflect right and wrong; the difference between what is desired by some in specific contexts and what is right or desirable should not be obscured.

The distinction between morals and ethics is a fine one; often these terms are used interchangeably. For example, Noddings (1984) explains that, although she uses the word "ethical" more often than "moral," she is "assuming that to behave ethically is to behave under the guidance of

an acceptable and justifiable account of what it means to be moral" (p.27). Some dictionary definitions also blur the lines dividing ethics and morals; in many cases, both terms are seen synonymously in their relation to principles or considerations of right and wrong (*Chamber's* 1967, *Collins* 1986, *Gage* 1983, *Oxford* 1973, *Webster's* 1971). Similarly, in this study it is not the behaviour itself that determines whether it is to be called an ethic or a moral. Instead the label, devised to alleviate any ambiguity in discussing individual and group perceptions, is assigned according to who holds the conviction or initiates the action--the individual (moral) or the group (ethic).

While accepting that moral behaviour implies "acting on a code that the individual has accepted as his own" (Peters 1973, p.24), it is assumed that such a code should embody at least some element of universality. Following Peters, while an individual's perception of right and wrong may be a personal matter, morality must transcend mere preference driven solely by self-interest; moral persons would not justify their own behaviour in ways that they would find unacceptable in others.

Durkheim, who describes morality as a reasonably constant set of commandments, also views it as "not merely an individual disposition" (Durkheim 1961, p.27). However his conception of morality and morals all but eliminates the individual; he sees moral behaviour as that which enhances the collective interest only, and argues that individuals,

lacking a sense of private internal morality, possess a moral conscience that is solely a direct reflection of society (Durkheim 1961, p.90). He would likely dismiss any distinction between morals and ethics as found here. For Durkheim, society is the single arbiter of morality, and he would consider ethics and morals to be one in the same.

Conversely, Barnard accepts morals as "a private code of conduct consisting of positive and negative prescriptions" (Barnard 1938, p.262). This definition, although closer than Durkheim's to the term used in this paper, neglects to emphasize the concepts of right and wrong so central here. Even though Barnard does accept that private moral codes may be common to many individuals, his discussion of shared morals and public moral codes would be, in the terms of this study, a pertinent description of ethics.

While some dismiss morals as mere "attitudes related to specific behaviors and actions" (Scott and Hart 1979, p.3), others rightly argue that moral claims, embodying more than a simple statement of preference or opinion, "involve concepts such as right and wrong and express duties and obligations" (Strike, Haller, Soltis 1988, p.37).

Such an expression of obligation denotes the imperative to act: "Moral values demand action on our part and if we fail to act they accuse us of evil. To say 'X is right' and do nothing to establish X in the world is to be open to the charge of insincerity, hypocrisy, lying, or at the very

least, cowardice" (Stott 1988, pp.48-49). In accordance with Stott, the interpretation of "moral" joins "right" with "ought."

In summary, "that which is moral relates to principles of right conduct in behavior; the behavior conforms to accepted principles of what is considered right, virtuous, or just" (Rich 1984, p.122). However, the focus for the definition of moral here is with the individual. When reference is made to an individual teacher's or principal's morals, the issue to be examined involves that specific individual's *perception* of "that which is moral." Thus a distinction is drawn between a morality based on right and wrong and a morality based on a set of beliefs or value preferences about right and wrong. MacIntyre (1981) describes the latter, value preferences, as emotivist. This study is concerned with both types. As explained in the section concerning the conceptual framework, its philosophical base supports the first definition of morality and ethics, while the empirical investigation focuses on the latter.

As with morals, ethics concern principles of right and wrong in conduct (Durant 1953, p.399); however, for the purpose of this study, the use of the term ethics will signify the collective moral convictions and perceptions of more than one individual. For example, the ethics of a teacher group or groups or the organizational ethics that pervade the school culture as a whole may be addressed.

Obviously, as stated previously, the overlap between morals and ethics is significant.

It has been noted that "the tendency to lump ethical judgments under the general class of value judgments and then to treat all value judgments alike is the source of much confusion about ethics" (Strike and Soltis 1985, p.9). It is again stressed that ethical judgements, like moral ones, should embrace a perception of right and wrong and should not be mere value preferences. Similarly ethical standards of conduct should be distinguished from the "seductive notion that ethics merely describes the standards of behavior actually used by particular groups. Thus, the 'everybody-does-it' rationale carries no moral weight. Principles of honesty, fair play, compassion and respect, for example, transcend custom and practice" (Josephson 1991, p.52).

While fully accepting this definition of ethics, a source of confusion again must be acknowledged. As an empirical study, this research deals with *perceptions*, both individual and group, of ethical behaviour. Therefore, as stated earlier, the term ethics may, at times, be used to define those convictions of the "everybody-does-it-therefore-it's-right" variety. Such a use of the terminology is not intended to undermine or contradict the philosophical belief in the right and wrong component built into the conceptual framework.

Another definition of ethics, one that is peripheral to its use here, articulates a more formalized and theoretical "inquiry into the nature of morality and moral acts" (Rich 1984, p.122). Such definitions confine ethics to a philosophical and academic discipline used as a method of inquiry into principles of human conduct. Although the philosophical implications of such definitions are relevant to this study, that specific use of the terminology is not applicable.

Similarly other definitions of ethics claim the term refers to "articulated, theoretical codes" (Scott and Hart 1979, p.3); ethical principles rigidly define rules and are "cast in theoretical frameworks from which laws are derived and formal codes are constructed" (Scott and Hart 1979, p.3). Note the absence of any reference to right or wrong in such definitions. While such a use of ethics is incomplete and quite inadequate, professional ethical codes do indeed exist as at least a partial influence on a group's overall ethical convictions. They may certainly provide ethical guidelines, and their effect on members of the teaching profession will be examined closely.

In sum, ethics define shared group perceptions of right and wrong. "A major problem is that we (in modern society) are using the broad term values when we mean ethics and morals" (Josephson 1991, p.38). What then are values? Ethics and morals may be special types of values, but not all values are ethical or moral in nature.

One of the most frequently quoted definitions of a value is Kluckhohn's famous description: "A value is a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action" (Kluckhohn 1962, p.395). He reduces morals to merely one type of "the desirable" along with aesthetic values and other matters of taste and opinion.

Similarly Shaver and Strong divide values into three distinct categories: aesthetic, instrumental, and moral values. Their overall definition of values describes them as "our standards and principles for judging worth. They are the criteria by which we judge 'things' (people, objects, ideas, actions, and situations) to be good, worthwhile, desirable; or, on the other hand, bad, worthless, despicable; or, of course, somewhere in between these extremes" (Shaver and Strong 1976, p.15). It is possible to accept this definition of values while, at the same time, denying that moral values are of the same ilk as values of aesthetic opinion.

Closer to an acceptable approach to values is the assertion that "values express our choices as to our own good. We have a right to choose our own values and to pursue them. No one has a right to impose their values on us. Moral principles are, however, a matter of public concern. While it is desirable that people come to their moral principles voluntarily, moral principles express

duties and obligations to other people" (Strike, Haller, Soltis 1988, p.38). In simple terms values are "core beliefs which motivate our actions" (Josephson 1990, p.68). They may or may not relate to fundamental issues of right and wrong, morality and ethics.

A final term that should be defined at this point is "norms." Dictionary definitions offer variations of the same semantic theme; a norm is "an authoritative rule or standard of conduct" (*Oxford* 1973, *Webster's* 1971), a "pattern or trait taken to be typical in the behavior of a social group" (*Webster's* 1975), "the standard for a certain group, a model or pattern" (*Gage* 1983), and "a standard of achievement or behaviour that is required, desired, or designated as normal" (*Collins* 1986). Within organizations, norms are those often informal and occasionally formal standards that define how things are to be done and what the expectations for organizational life are. Durkheim believes that "norms must be established which determine what proper relationships are, and to which people conform. Deference to established norms is the stuff of our daily duties" (Durkheim 1961, p.37).

Some assessments of behaviour stemming from organizational norms are relatively value-neutral. For example, norms are seen to "serve an instrumental purpose in securing conformity to certain patterns of behavior by teachers and students. But behaving is not believing; that is, the norms do not convey any sense of moral authority;

violation of the norm does not evoke any feeling of guilt or outrage" (Blumberg and Greenfield 1986, p.229). Similarly others neglect to mention the value implications altogether by regarding norms as merely reflections of "individual habits of the personnel . . . Such norms are nothing more than the customary or expected ways of behaving. These norms make it possible for members of the organization to work together" (Wiles, Wiles, Bondi 1981, p.68). Are the above definitions intended to suggest that there is no such thing as a wrong or unethical/immoral norm, and that operational norms are exempt from scrutiny and moral evaluation? Instead Sockett (1990) rightly asserts that rules which establish norms in matters of individual or institutional behaviour do indeed have a moral aspect as their force and their strength.

The concepts of morals and ethics are more elevated than norms since they address directly questions of rightness and wrongness, while a norm may not compel the same consideration. Nevertheless, norms are expressions of value, no matter how obscure that value may be, and once a seemingly trivial norm becomes a question of fundamental morals for even one person, that norm begins to reveal its value characteristics. However, while the conceptual ideas inherent in the study focus on morals and ethics, it must be emphasized that the lines defining morals, ethics, values, norms, and rules are not always drawn clearly.

In sum, an assumption of this study is that morals and ethics, for the individual and the group respectively, are both based fundamentally on right and wrong. Sets of morality and ethics are not of equivalent value. At the same time, the study focuses on the beliefs of teachers and administrators concerning morality and ethics. It is assumed that all such beliefs are not entirely moral or ethical.

Conceptual Framework

Questions and issues concerning the individual's moral duty versus the organizational imperative of the collective ethic or the group's authority have been addressed throughout history. For example, Hobbes and the conservative philosophers believed that society is threatened by disobedience, and therefore it is preferable to implement an evil order rather than disobey the structure of authority (Milgram 1974, p.2). However the humanists argue that the "moral judgments of the individual must override authority when the two are in conflict" (Milgram 1974, p.2). This dispute provides a conceptual framework for the examination of values in terms of the organizational context of norms and ethics and through the prism of individuals' morals.

It is not, however, the intention of the research study to resolve this philosophical debate. Blanket statements that argue for one alternative over another are unsatisfactory, for it seems that there will always be exceptions contingent upon situational realities. Being right and being wrong are not characteristics peculiar to either the individual or the group at all times without exceptions. Attempts to address this conceptual conflict hinge largely on the moral theory tangle which is explored in greater depth within the larger study itself.

In his theory of organizations Barnard acknowledges this precise dilemma when he writes that "to do something that is required obviously for the good of the organization but which conflicts with deep personal codes - such as the sense of what is honest - destroys personal probity; but not to do it destroys organization cohesiveness and efficiency . . . either action or failure to act in these cases does violence to individual moralities" (Barnard 1938, p.280). It is within the conceptual value parameters of the individual versus the group that this study seeks to discern the nature of such "violence."

Within this conceptual framework there exists a dual framework, two interrelated frames dealing with the theoretical and the empirical aspects of this study. The first one may be considered as the "ideas frame," for want of a more creative term. It involves intellectual and philosophical issues while examining competing moral and

ethical theories and paradigms. It follows in part from MacIntyre's discussion of an objective moral order as rooted in traditionalism and fundamental values despite "whatever our private moral standpoint or our society's particular codes may be" (MacIntyre 1981, p.179).

The conceptual ideas in this study do not promote individual disobedience or anarchy every time one finds the ethics of the group morally disagreeable on a personal, subjective level. Conversely, this study disputes the belief that the collective group must prevail without exception thus allowing for the potential "covering up" of wrong and the acceptance of the morally unacceptable. Clearly right should prevail, whether it is represented by the individual or the group. This implies the existence of absolute right and wrong, an objective standard of truth that is defined in this study by the fundamental principles of the classical virtues of justice, courage, and honesty.

This dimension of the framework raises contentious and conceptually thorny questions; it introduces to the study the murky domain of moral philosophy in which paradigmatic camps are pitted against one another--objectivism versus subjectivism, relativism and emotivism versus absolutism and positivism. Ensuing debates and disagreements are rooted in classical and modern philosophy. There is neither adequate space nor scope to address this content in this paper. The larger study itself examines and contrasts subjectivism and relataivism (Becker 1986; Bernstein 1983; Hodgkinson 1978

and 1983; Greenfield 1979, 1980, and 1986), positivism (Kohlberg 1971; Parsons et al 1962; Radcliffe-Brown 1958), and feminist objectivism which promotes an ethic of care, distinct from justice, as the basis of morality (Gilligan 1982; Noddings 1984); it ultimately supports traditional or classical non-positivist objectivism as discussed by Adler (1991), Holmes (1984, 1986, and 1991), and MacIntyre (1981).

Ultimately the philosophical problem of right and wrong has implications for choice, self-reproach, and nagging doubts that plague individuals as they confront issues involving integrity, hypocrisy, conscience, agony, and guilt within the realm of moral and ethical behaviour and belief. The philosophical bases of the conceptual issues in this study are of considerable importance because interest in the research findings will be based not only on how educators behave in morally problematic situations, but also on one's conception of how moral and ethical problems ought to be addressed.

Nevertheless, as an empirical research study, the central focus is not on an attempt to resolve philosophical disputes. Whatever emanates from the research data, the findings and conclusions cannot, in any clinical or conceptual sense, lend support to any of the competing claims. Thus, the second related frame, dealing with the empirical nature of this research study, may be considered as the "investigative frame." Perceptions of the good and

the right as found in the larger society also apply to education systems. Therefore this frame structures the investigation, observation, and examination of values in terms of organizational ethics and individuals' morals. Its intention is to examine how individuals perceive right and wrong and how, as a consequence, they act based on or in spite of their own beliefs.

In this sense, the methodological aspect of the study is largely subjectivist despite the rejection, in conceptual terms, of subjectivist philosophy. This is not an inconsistency, but rather an acknowledgment that individuals do indeed have differing moral perspectives, but that they are not necessarily of equal value; it is the function of the investigative frame to allow these perspectives to be articulated in their own individual and subjective way. Both interrelated frames, as part of the larger conceptual framework, address individual morality in opposition to the collective ethic.

Reasons for the Study

Recently much public attention has focused on value issues concerning corporate, industrial, legal, and medical ethics as well as those associated with advanced science and technology. But most of the literature regarding values and education addresses aspects of moral education, values

teaching, and contemporary morality in the classroom. These issues comprise an area of interest that is separate from that which is discussed in this study; the concern here is not with the teaching of values but rather with the existence of values within an individual's consciousness and an organization's culture.

Although not specifically concerned with education, Schon discusses professionals and their public image that, since the middle 1960s, has become increasingly "tarnished" (Schon 1983 and 1987). He refers to the "crisis of confidence" in professional knowledge on the part of the public due partially to the belief that "professionals could not be counted on to police themselves, to live up to standards of probity which set them above the ethical level of the general public. Like everyone else, they seemed ready to put their special status to private use" (Schon 1983, p.11). Although Schon associates this crisis of confidence and legitimacy with professionals such as doctors, lawyers, scientists, and engineers, in acknowledging education as a "minor profession" (Schon 1983, p.23), he does stimulate interesting speculation about the ethical image of teachers and principals.

One may cite numerous references in the popular media to crises of ethics in science (Pyette 1990) and of business and corporate morality and ethics (Jackall 1983, McCoy 1983, Olive 1987, *Time* 1987, Francis 1989, Eisenkraft 1990). In one such article (Francis 1989), a professor at the Wharton

School of Business in Philadelphia discusses the moral dilemma of doing one's job. He states that:

> It has to do with the roles we play. We don't like to do it but it is what's expected of us. I just ran the case (a case study exercise involving a clear moral choice between public safety and financial gain for a company) last week with a group of 70 MBA students, and only one in the class decided to resign from the board in protest (against the decision to endanger health for profit) and he was the chairman. *It happens once in a while where there is a strong individual who stands up against the majority. But it's not very common* [my emphasis].

Clearly this individual-against-the-majority dilemma, when concerning issues of moral and ethical importance, is of great significance in all professional and occupational life. Yet, surprisingly, it has received little attention in the education world. It is this reason, mainly, that gives this research study its urgency.

Although, within education, consideration is given to codes of professional ethics governing the behaviour of teachers as a collective unity, discussions of codes differ from organizational ethics as defined here. Codes of ethics are generally developed within a formal and professional context and have as their main objective the protection of professional, and sometimes unionized, members from each other. Some argue that "for education to advance as a profession, far greater attention and concern must be given to professional ethics and its instruction, and adequate mechanisms should be provided for the development,

dissemination, interpretation, and enforcement of ethical codes" (Rich 1984, p.v). However such an approach to professional ethics centres on standardized, written codes and largely ignores the personal value perspectives of individuals and informal groups that may be potentially more influential in the daily activity of working professionals. Therefore discussion, while not ignoring the force of formalized codes, must reach beyond them for greater insight.

One of the few empirical studies designed to examine conflicts facing principals and the values they use in their daily decision making is Ashbaugh and Kasten's important analysis (1984). It identifies three categories of values used by principals; two of these deal with personal preference and operational values while the third category of "transcendent values" is seen to be based on codes of behaviour rooted in philosophical ethical beliefs. These transcendent values, with their emphasis on right and wrong conduct, would be seen as morals and ethics in the terminology of this study; Ashbaugh and Kasten found them to be of only minimal importance in principals' decision making processes. They write that:

> Officials in public organizations who have transcendent values will find occasions on which the organization's metavalues and their transcendent values are in conflict. These conflicts cause a variety of behavioral responses on the part of officials. They may carry out the organization's values when these are believed wrong and unfair to those affected; they may compromise their own integrity in

> order to get ahead; they may choose to leave the role of official because the conflict cannot be resolved in favor of their transcendent value set.
> (Ashbaugh and Kasten 1984, p.205)

Ashbaugh and Kasten neglect to consider also the potential options of quiet subversion of organizational values or outright conflict by a principal taking a moral stand. These are issues to be addressed in this study, unlike in Ashbaugh and Kasten's which does not have as its focus the treatment of clear ethical and moral dilemmas. Furthermore, their study focuses on principals only, while this one emphasizes the moral situation of teachers. Similarly their follow-up study (1988), a self-proclaimed failed attempt to describe values using quantitative factor-based scales, confirmed that "administrators subordinate personal concerns to organizational issues" (Kasten and Ashbaugh 1988, p.22). Once again, their focus is on values in general, not on morals and ethics specifically.

Typically, when addressed, value conflict within schools is associated with student deviance; yet similar departures from the norms and ethics of a school culture on the part of teachers or administrators are overshadowed by theories of socialization. The concept of socialization advances the belief that teachers who are not successfully socialized to accept the values of the school inevitably leave either the school or the profession altogether. Such an alternative has been implied previously in this section with reference to the Ashbaugh and Kasten study as well as

to the remarks of the Wharton business professor. However, there exists another alternative that lies between complete acceptance through socialization and deviance: it is that individuals merely accommodate to their work environments. Such concepts as accommodation, compromise, situational adjustment (Becker 1970; Lacey 1977), situation ethics (Noddings 1984), and suspended morality (Josephson 1991; Milgram 1974) also need to be addressed in a research study concerned with moral and ethical questions.

Suspended morality in a profession such as teaching raises some sinister possibilities. Education, itself seen to be "a moral enterprise" (Holmes 1986, p.40), assumes a role of moral agency in which educators act "with appropriate moral autonomy . . . (having) a clear set of principles or virtues in which they believe and on which they act" (Sockett 1990, pp.229-230). Yet despite this, we are confronted with an increased number of stories about individuals who have, effectively, suspended a sense of conscience and morality for one reason or another. For example, victims in a recent trial concerning child abuse at boys' reform schools were shocked to discover "after all these years that so many people knew about the abuse at the two schools, but did so little to try to stop it" (*Toronto Star*, January 5, 1991). Similarly in the trial of James Keegstra, convicted on the charge of "willful promotion of hatred towards an identifiable group (Jews) through his classroom teaching" (Schwartz 1986, abstract), courtroom

testimony revealed that "two successive principals of the school and the former superintendent of the school district had sheltered Keegstra by ignoring or failing to act on parental complaints" (Schwartz 1986, abstract).

The above examples represent the "big stories," those seemingly rare cases that reach the newspaper; but what about smaller, less sensational incidents in which moral agency is either compromised or ignored? Do stories exist that are never reported by the media but that encompass, in their own way, just as much moral agony and ethical guilt? It is for these reasons that, through the study introduced here, I seek to discern the nature of moral and ethical conflict and accommodation within schools, based on the perceptions of individual teachers and administrators. Similarly, any moral dilemmas and ethical consequences that emerge and the subsequent actions of those involved in education are explored.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of the research study is to develop a descriptive account of some of the ethical conflicts and moral dilemmas faced by teachers and principals. Furthermore, its purpose is to investigate individuals' actions and beliefs within the context of school culture, and to determine whether or not a personal awareness exists

that enables teachers and administrators to explain why they do what they do as a result of value issues. Ultimately, the study will satisfy the "need-to-know" criterion for research as it probes the finer details of value issues as they evolve in schools.

Good claims that "the social sciences especially are concerned with values, including social decisions, interests, desires, beliefs, prejudices, and moral implications . . . Attitudes of indifference or cynicism on the part of scientists toward moral and ethical problems of society can result in apathy and cynicism among other citizens, with resulting dangers to both science and a good society" (Good 1966, p.20). While the purpose of this study is not necessarily to assuage apathy and cynicism, Good's point is significant. However, consideration of moral and ethical implications is not a by-product of the process of conducting research for this study; rather such consideration is the central purpose of and reason for the study itself.

As a philosophical study, its significance is not meant to be practical in any short-term sense. Instead it is hoped that the study will be significant for its contribution to the level of knowledge of the field of education generally and of educational administration specifically. It is also hoped that, in exposing and discussing value issues and possibly value conflicts within schools, this research study will fulfil a need to increase

the level of moral and ethical awareness and clarity of educators.

This objective, to increase moral and ethical awareness of the implications of human conduct, raises a disputable assumption. While it is agreeable to believe that heightened awareness will lead to "commitment (the desire to do the right thing) and competency (the ability to foresee and avoid ethical problems and implement moral decisions)" (Josephson 1990, p.10), this may be an overly optimistic conclusion. It is for this reason that this study is not designed as a practical guide to ethical behaviour. Nevertheless, it is hoped that, as a philosophical catalyst, it will inspire greater reflective activity among educators.

In borrowing a phrase from Butler, Peters defines "conscience" as "a principle of reflection in men, by which they distinguish between, approve and disapprove their own actions" (Peters 1973, p.26). Similarly Schon (1983) encourages professional practitioners to engage in ongoing "reflection-in-action" thereby enabling them to make sense of their behaviour. However, while reflection may curtail blind acceptance of organizational norms, such a technical, analytical approach to reflective behaviour as that which Schon implies does not necessarily advance the inclination towards behaving in a more moral way. Increased knowledge and understanding of the human condition are good because they allow for an improved access to truth and justice. At the same time, knowledge and understanding may be used for

bad ends or they may be used for the advancement of any morality existing within, sometimes defined in terms of self-interest. Hodgkinson (1978) is quite correct in cautioning us that while self-conscious awareness is valuable it does not ensure, by some act of faith, that good action will prevail.

Despite this, Hodgkinson's stated purpose is to argue for increased ethical awareness among administrators; with the exception of a fundamental and important difference, one purpose of this study is similar. Hodgkinson argues for:

> The ethical necessity of raising the private consciousness of value - with the end of advancing authenticity amongst administrators. This authenticity I have defined in no very original way, but in strict accordance with Barnard, and for that matter with Polonius in *Hamlet*, as being true to one's own set of values, whatever they may be. Authenticity, then, is the submission to the discipline of "whatever morality exists within."
> (Hodgkinson 1978, p.187)

This research study also acknowledges the ethical necessity of raising private consciousness; however it rejects Hodgkinson's notion of the primacy of individuals' values *whatever they may be*. To encourage action based on *whatever morality exists within* can be a dangerous prescription. I prefer to substitute this contentious interpretation of Polonius' dubious wisdom with Robert Morton's appeal in Terence Rattigan's play, *The Winslow Boy*; Morton, in addressing members of Britain's House of Commons on a matter of justice, urged, "Let Right be done" (Rattigan 1946,p.55).

In summary, some social scientists claim that "the major reason for educational research is to develop new knowledge about teaching and learning and administration. The new knowledge is valuable because it will lead eventually to the improvement of educational practice" (Borg and Gall 1983, p.4). As stated previously, this study cannot guarantee such improvement. However it may be hoped that, in thinking about what they do and why they do it, educators may develop a deeper sense of the moral and ethical implications that their actions have for their students, colleagues, themselves, and the role of education in general. After all, "even the 'kindest' people can act cruelly if they do not fully understand the consequences of their actions" (Beck 1990, p.146). The research study introduced in this paper is descriptive rather than prescriptive, and its ultimate purpose and significance rests on its capacity to provide a wider perspective and cultivate a deeper understanding of what we do in schools.

Research Questions

In this descriptive and investigative research study, eight research questions provide a guide useful for the collection and interpretation of the data. The questions: 1) What are some of the moral and ethical dilemmas for teachers and principals within schools?

2) Are these individuals aware of personal morals that occasionally conflict with their interpretation of the cultural ethics of their schools?

3) How do individuals resolve such value conflicts?

   i. Do they conform to the cultural norms or ethics and subvert personal morals?

   ii. If so, do they do this knowingly because they are "just doing their job"?

   iii. Do they genuinely "buy into" the ethics of the organization that legitimate and justify their actions?

   iv. If they do not conform to cultural ethics, what do they do instead? Why? What is the result?

4) Is there some middle ground between socialization and outright conflict where individual teachers and principals conform to organizational ethics but justify their actions in moral terms of their own, rather than in those of the institution?

5) Have individuals repeated (or would they repeat) the same actions that conflict with personal morals but conform to school ethics and norms (or vice versa)? Why/Why not?

6) Are there differences or parallels between teachers and principals concerning perceptions of moral and ethical conflict? (Note however--this is not a comparative study.)

7) What does all this suggest about the nature of significant school ethics?

8) What are the implications for the ethical future of schools? (Note--although one cannot predict future human behaviour in any scientific way, this question will be

addressed with reference to the philosophical framework and conceptual ideas of the study).

Methodology: a brief outline

As a descriptive and investigative study, an exploratory and probing approach to the research is demanded; a predetermined choice of options and opinions as listed on a survey would not be suitable. Personal perspectives, individual perceptions, values and beliefs are elucidated most effectively through extensive descriptive language; therefore the qualitative research data required for this study is best collected by means of semistructured interviews (Bailey 1987, p.190). The one hour interviews have been conducted, and the data collection stage is complete. Each interview was tape recorded and has been transcribed in full.

The interview protocol was comprised of non-directive and open-ended questions used to stimulate the respondents into discussing broad areas. For additional depth, probing questions based on specific potentially ethical issues were asked; these issues were derived largely from concerns raised by respondents in the pilot study (Campbell 1989) and addressed such areas as sensitive curricular content, grading policies, the use of illegally copied materials, censorship of texts, discipline and punishment, behaviour

during teacher strikes, and criticism of and loyalty to other teacher colleagues. Each respondent also read four (out of a total of twelve) "vignettes" involving sensitive moral and ethical situations and responded to related questions.

The sample involved thirty respondents: five elementary and five secondary principals each with a minimum of one year administrative experience and ten elementary and ten secondary teachers each with a minimum of two years teaching experience. The respondents were drawn from eleven largely urban public school boards, and an effort was made to ensure a heterogeneous mix of ages, experience, and subject specializations; both male and female respondents were represented.

While the collection and analysis of data were conducted, to some extent, simultaneously, the full analysis of the research has not yet been completed, as mentioned in the introduction to this paper. Analysis is based on the thematic organization of the data, and organizing principles, useful in the reporting of the empirical findings, include elements of Lacey's interpretive study (1977) of situational adjustment and other social strategies of compliance as well as of Grace's functional study (1972) of role conflict and his three-tiered variation of situational adjustment. The examination of the empirical content also recalls relevant literature pertaining to suspended morality (Josephson 1991; Milgram 1974),

organizational culture (Hargreaves 1991; Sarason 1982; Shils 1981; Waller 1932), socialization (Getzels 1968; Lortie 1975; Woods 1979 and 1984), obedience to authority (Milgram 1974), tyranny of the group (Malcolm 1973), and secrecy and loyalty versus organizational subversion and "whistleblowing" (Bok 1982; Sockett 1990; Waller 1932).

Schools may not be seen to involve serious moral and ethical dimensions. Yet, as the pilot study revealed, there is no lack of value dilemmas in schools that disturb those who confront them; one of its main findings claimed that "teachers may be willing to contravene school ethics that emanate from administrative norms, directives, and beliefs on moral grounds based on individual and personal value systems. However, they are often very reluctant to do the same where teachers' ethics are concerned; (they showed) an unwillingness to undermine collegial norms and values" (Campbell 1989, p.6). Although at times uncomfortable with the consequences, teachers admitted that "professional" behaviour or loyalty in a collegial sense was a dominant measure of moral and ethical action. Furthermore, analysis of the larger empirical study so far implies, among other things, that abuse gets concealed, incompetence goes unchecked, deception and cheating are, if not condoned, at least ignored, and a type of collegial and bureaucratic tyranny reigns concurrently.

Summary

The function of this paper has been to introduce the research problem of the professional teacher and principal having a moral conscience but working within a school with its own ethical components. The potential for conflict and tension was addressed, and the relevant terminology was explained. The conceptual framework, as rooted in the historical dispute between an individual's moral duty and the collective ethic, was explicated; similarly its accompanying dual framework was outlined. Reasons for the research study and an explanation of its purpose and significance were provided. This culminated in the itemization of the eight research questions that both guide and pervade the entire study. A brief statement of the methodology used in the larger empirical study was outlined. However, as explained, the focus of this paper is on the conceptual rather than the empirical nature of the research.

In conclusion, individuals bring to their schools personal moral codes that do not necessarily coincide with the ethical dimensions that have been entrenched previously by others in the school cultures. Therefore, since one cannot assume that the ethics that contribute to a school's cultural identity automatically mirror the moral values of the individuals working within that culture, inevitable conflicts must be anticipated. Given that all people possess values and make many value judgements each day

(Bailey 1987, p.27), conflict resolutions that rely on individuals' morals or the collective's ethics are implicitly valuational.

The intention of this study is not to be overly judgemental of individual educators as moral beings, but rather to describe their perceptions of conflict and their subsequent actions, beliefs, and the tensions they experience. One may concur with L.C. Becker (1973, p.86):

> What we require of a moral man is not that he make no mistakes, but that he not undertake to do what he knows is wrong, and that he make every effort to discover what is right. Conduct is often perilous morally, and one must take his chances: that he will actually bring off what (and only what) he sets out to do; and that what he has decided to do is of the value he thinks it to be.

Educators, as moral individuals, confront daily dilemmas concerning questions of right and wrong conduct appropriate to their beliefs and to their roles. The research problem, then, requires that I define and describe the ways in which the actions and beliefs of teachers and principals are affected by conflict between their morals and the ethics prevailing in their school cultures.

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